

The Necessity of Dogmatism. 13¹

to defend himself against attack, and in so doing he had to choose his position and take his stand on it. In demolishing the old Church he had to construct a new one, and construction involved the declaration of certain doctrines and a definite organisation. To refrain from constructing, organising, to practise an indefinite syncretism that would please all opinions, to be good-natured and undecided in the presence of opposition, would have been to defeat his own cause. Only a man of strong conviction, of indomitable will, of overmastering self-confidence, could have done the work that Luther did. The reformer must be a fighting man, and a fighting man must hit hard in a conflict in which the only alternative was death or victory. In this respect there could be no halting between two opinions. Reformers could scarcely afford to play the philosopher and consider toleration on its own merits. They were forced to defend their position against both Catholics and Protestant dissenters. If they were to hold their ground, there was no escape from the necessity of formulating confessions of their faith like the Augsburg Confession, in order both that they might distinguish between friend and foe and marshal their followers under the banner of what they held to be the truth. Truth at such a crisis of the world's history must be " confessed " in articles of belief, and if these articles are not held with all the force of soul and conscience, discomfiture, not victory, must be the result. It is useless to ignore the exigencies of the situation and demand of Luther and his fellow-reformers a profession of faith that might suit the twentieth century, but would certainly not have met the requirements of the sixteenth. Our complaint against Luther and his fellow-reformers is not that they formulated confessions of faith, but that in doing so they made them needlessly and unreasonably personal. They might have fought the battle of the Reformation against the powers of repression without fighting so bitterly against one another, whenever opinions over the interpretation of a text or an historical question clashed. They should at least have better understood the bearing of their own root principle and discounted their own fallibility in attacking the infallibility of Pope and Church. They were most of them men of strong personality, and they